

4.76
-31
1983



DECEMBER, 1983

DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAYS EMPLOYEE'S NEWSLETTER

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Earlier this month the Montana Highway Commission approved a list of projects tentatively scheduled to go to contract in state fiscal years 1986 and 87. The program reflects the greatly increased highway program approved by Montana's Legislature and the increased federal funding Montana has received as a result of passage of the STAA.

For the first time in recent years, we are able to plan ahead and anticipate which projects the Department will be able to let to contract at least four years out. This represents a major step forward in our ability to manage our resources and do a better job of building and maintaining Montana's highway system.

It also represents the first real use of some of the management systems we have been working on over the past few years. Using the Preconstruction and Construction Management Systems to calculate what our personnel needs will be as a result of the expanded programs, we are now in a position to start adding people to the highway program on the basis of clearly stated needs. Consequently, 109 new permanent positions have been authorized. Most will be in the field in the construction program, but some additional support staff have also been approved. We will also add the permanent positions to the preconstruction program in Helena. The hiring is authorized to begin as soon as possible.

Since almost all the positions called for on the basis of the management systems' information were approved, this is an important example of how valuable the management systems are to support the requests for personnel, both in this office and with the Legislature. As the other systems are implemented, we fully expect those to prove just as useful.

So, despite the months of frustration and cost in developing systems that are at times difficult to understand and that do increase the paper work, the efforts of MDOH personnel to make the systems work are starting to pay dividends.

But implementation of the management systems is only one of the important steps

the Department has taken over the past year. We have also completed reorganization, made most of the personnel decisions resulting from reorganization, implemented our new computer system, gotten a construction program that has almost doubled ready for contract as scheduled, obtained legislative approval for that program and a significant fuel tax increase to fund it, improved training, clarified personnel policies and successfully implemented the performance appraisal system, upgraded the equipment fleet, begun implementing the high band radio system in the field, implemented a preventative maintenance program, sold bonds to complete the Interstate system, stepped up GVW enforcement program, and have done a solid job of maintaining the roads during both summer and winter. Quite a list of accomplishments. But while we are not facing as many money changes in the future, it is essential that we build on what we have already done. Our goal in 1984 has to be to continue to improve the quality of service to the public. It requires taking that extra step, doing a little more than expected, going out of our way at times, but if we are successful, we can continue to keep the confidence of the public that made 1983 the most significant year for the MDOH since the 1930s.

UPWARD MOBILITY POLICY

The Department recently instituted an Upward Mobility Program for employees. The policy, #3-0610, can be found in the Montana Operations Manual.

Upward Mobility is a systematic management effort that focuses personnel policy and practice on the development and implementation of specific career opportunities for employees in lower-level positions.

Upward Mobility opportunities are available to all employees on a nondiscriminatory basis. By assisting employees, including minorities, women and the handicapped in lower-graded positions to gain skills and advance within the system an Upward Mobility program can have a positive impact on the agency's overall EEO posture. The program will not create a new organizational structure as it will utilize existing systems to accomplish its objectives. Some of the systems include:

But all the success, all the changes, came because MDOH employees did their job and did it well. The hours spent snowplowing and sanding, processing payrolls, surveying, drafting, working in a weigh station, repairing equipment, negotiating right-of-way, getting projects completed, etc., made it possible.

I think a recent editorial in the *Montana Standard* said it best:

But if you're in a car in lousy winter weather, and you manage to get to your destination on time and without incident, you know who's really important.

It's the snow-removal crews and the people driving those plows and sanders.

We'd ask them to take a bow, but they're too busy out there clearing the roads.

I want to express my appreciation and thanks for what has been done and what can be done in 1984. I wish you all a merry Christmas and a very good new year.

1. Training Policy (MOM Policy #3-0800)
2. Pay Plan Rules (MOM Policy #3-0505)
3. Selection Policy (MOM Policy #3-0160)

Career ladders for the various positions in the Department are currently being developed. When completed, they will be added to the Upward Mobility Policy in the MOM Manual so employees can see what career advancement opportunities are open to them.

Training sessions have also been scheduled statewide. The training consists of an overview of the Upward Mobility policy, a video cassette entitled "Where Do I Go From Here", and a question and answer session. It is suggested all employees attend.

If anyone has any questions concerning Upward Mobility, contact the Civil Rights Unit at 444-6331.





LAST YEAR'S EIGHT OUTSTANDING EMPLOYEES based on their performance appraisals. Left to right—Standing; Director Wicks, Bill Wertman, GVW—Bozeman; Don Mittlestadt, Construction—Missoula; Frank Kluesner, GVW—Lima; Howard Hadden, Maintenance—Hysham; Pat Gerrells, Maintenance—Billings. Left to right—Sitting; Marjorie Blewett, Safety & Training—Helena; Shirley Farley, GVW—Helena; and Delores Walter, Photogrammetry—Helena.

BUY AMERICA

The Federal Highway Administration has issued a final regulation implementing the "Buy America" requirements of the Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1982 (STAA), according to FHWA Administrator Ray A. Barnhart.

The major provisions of the final rule require that only U.S.-produced steel and cement may be used on Federally funded highway projects, unless the use of such foreign products would result in at least a 25 percent reduction in the project's cost.

"States may request waivers to the Buy America rule if the domestically-produced product in question is not available in sufficient quantities; or, if there is a compelling reason, such as a determination that by applying the Buy America requirements job opportunities would be reduced rather than created in the affected industry," Barnhart said.

More than 560 comments on the proposed rule were received from members of Congress, manufacturers, suppliers, contractors, State and local agencies, and foreign governments.

Barnhart noted that because of the difficulty in identifying the national origin of components used in manufacturing products used in highway construction, the FHWA determined it to be in the public interest to waive the Buy America rule for manufactured products other than steel and cement.

The FHWA Administrator said, "Clearly, Congress focused its attention on protecting the domestic steel and cement industries. For that reason, the former Buy America provision has been expanded to prohibit the use of all foreign steel products, not just specialty steels, and all foreign cement."

PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS

The second full performance appraisal cycle is being completed throughout the Department. An awards ceremony will be held for employees whose performance is identified as outstanding through the appraisal process. To ensure no employee entitled to an award is overlooked, supervisors are reminded to submit a recommendation in memo form, including documentation of outstanding performance to *Les Peterson, Chair, Performance Review Board, Construction Bureau, Helena*.

Other members of the review board are Art Braut, Duncan Stephenson, Shirley Farley, and Bob Fischer. The Board reviews recommendations and refers award candidates to the Director.

Last summer Director Wicks presented eight Department employees with the first awards recognizing outstanding performance. "The work and achievements of these eight employees represents the highest standard of public service. Recognition of excellence in public service is too often overlooked, but is absolutely necessary if we are to encourage employees to do a better job of serving the people of Montana," Wicks said in making the presentations.

The planning phase for next year's appraisal is also underway. Measures of performance should be carefully designed, be measurable and clearly understood by both employee and supervisor. This year's appraisal will also include a mid-point appraisal for all employees.

LETTING PLANS . . . JANUARY

The following projects are tentatively scheduled for the January 26th, 1984 bid letting.

PROJECT LOCATION	INTERSTATE PROJECTS	MILES
St. Regis	I-90 Reconstruction	6.3
Goldcreek	I-90 Plant mix overlay	9.9
Homestake Pass	I-90 Plant mix overlay	9.0
Bozeman	I-90 Expansion joint repair	—
Jefferson Co. line—N	I-15 Plant mix overlay	10.2
North of Harlowton		
West of Poplar		
West of Whitefish		
East of Havre		
Absarokee-Columbus		
PRIMARY PROJECTS		
US-191 Overlay & widen		8.7
RAILROAD SAFETY		
US-2 Bridge end treatment		—
HAZARD ELIMINATION		
US-93 Guardrail, slope flattening		0.5
US-2 Guardrail at bridge ends		—
MT-78 Slope flattening, signing		—



SKID CONTROL CONFUSION

If you are like most people, you were probably told by whomever taught you to drive that the way to handle a skid is to "turn in the direction of the skid." And, like most people, you probably have only a vague idea what the phrase means.

It means that if the back of the car is skidding right, you turn right; if it skids left, you turn left. Thinking in terms of the back of the car is confusing, however, so driver education experts are now telling people to *turn in the direction you want the front of the car to go*. Instructors have found drivers have an easier time understanding this phrase because they are already looking at the front of the car, so it gives them a guideline to follow. The move is the same, just the way of describing it has changed.

Driving experts are changing the directions they give for slowing a car down on slippery surfaces, however. Whereas at one time the advice given was to pump the brakes, it is now recommended that drivers squeeze the brakes by pushing down on them slowly until they begin to lock, then let up and repeat the process.

Pump braking, which is supposed to keep the brakes from locking, can actually cause the newer disc brakes to lock, because they do not release as quickly as the old drum brakes. Squeeze braking is not as likely to lock up either kind of brake, so experts suggest drivers of any kind of car use this method.

In addition to locking the brakes, pump braking can add to the problem by not letting the driver feel that his wheels are locked, because he is so busy using his body to pump. Squeeze braking lets drivers feel what the car is doing while they are braking, allowing them to sense a lockup right away.

Because squeeze braking is new to many drivers and is not learned instantly, experts suggest drivers practice the technique away from traffic to get a feel for how it affects their cars. Aside from knowing the right methods for braking and skidding, driving instructors say the best winter driving advice is to do everything more slowly.

INTERCHANGE SURVEY RESULTS

In the last issue of the *Interchange* a survey questionnaire was included. Of the 800 copies distributed, the total response was 23—not many, but in the normal 2-3 percent return range typical of most surveys.

In responding to the questionnaire 19 out of 21 people found the articles "about right"; 11 people wanted the *Interchange* published monthly, 8 bi-monthly, and 4 quarterly; and 21 of 22 wished to receive future issues.

Special subjects the respondents wanted covered included: more divisions, sections, and areas; performance appraisals; reports from the field; calendar of upcoming meetings and training; more information about the expanded construction program; policy concerning overlay and widening versus reconstruction; project selection; management and human relations; how to apply for other positions; goals of MDOH and how it operates; innovative projects; and pictures of new structures.

The decision was made at a recent Administrative Staff meeting to retain the quarterly publishing schedule of the *Interchange*, to print more copies for distribution, and to incorporate more articles related to personnel affairs.

EMPLOYEES BENEFIT ASSOCIATION

The Highway Employees Benefit Association (H.E.B.A.), Helena Headquarters, has announced its Board of Directors for 1984. They are: Kathy Wenzek, Safety and Training, 2nd term; Jo Schmitz, Information; Dorothy Thiede, Materials, 2nd term; Pat Wall, Printing; and Wendy Anderson, Personnel. The new members work along with the members of 1983 who act in an advisory capacity until their term ends December 31, 1983. Those members are: Marilyn D'Arcy, Louie Lafloe, Dick Wiley, Mike Cloud, and Nels Wilkins.

One of the main functions of the H.E.B.A. is to put on the Highway Department's Christmas party each year. The party this year was held in the Civic Center Ballroom on December 17. The H.E.B.A. obtains its money through vending machine sales, coffee pot rental and fund-raising events.

In addition to the annual Christmas party, the H.E.B.A. puts on a Department picnic each summer, sends flowers to hospitalized employees or immediate family and members who have lost a loved one (immediate family only).

If anyone has any questions or suggestions for the upcoming year, please let one of the Board Members be advised.

RIGHT-OF-WAY'S GOLDEN SPIKE

Twenty-eight years after Congress passed the Federal Highway Act of 1956, formally creating a national system of Interstate and Defense highways, the Right-of-Way Bureau and Legal Division are nearing completion of right-of-way acquisition for one of the most challenging transportation programs ever undertaken in Montana. Right-of-way has been acquired for three Interstate highway routes in Montana—I-15, I-90, and I-94—which extend over nearly 1200 miles and include acquisition for an accompanying network of interchanges, urban connections, frontage roads, structures, weigh stations, rest areas, and land service facilities.

The three Interstates, which were designed and located over virtually new alignments, required the appraisal and purchase of over 5,000 parcels of urban, suburban, and rural lands. To date this acquisition exceeds 36,000 acres of land for over 230 construction projects.

Excluding the few remaining publicly owned and railroad parcels, the Right-of-Way Bureau is conducting negotiations with the remaining six private landowners to complete right-of-way acquisition for four-lane Interstate construction in Montana.

Putting the final piece of right-of-way in place may become the privilege of the Legal Division. Slightly over 10 percent of right-of-way parcels are acquired by condemnation, a legal procedure requiring the expertise of the Legal Division.

The end of an era? Nearly, but additions and corrections will continue perhaps as long as there are highways.

TRAINING SESSIONS

Upcoming training sessions are as follows:

Communication Skills Workshop

Instructor—Bob Marsenich of Metamorphosis

Jan. 5-6 Missoula

Essentials of Situational Leadership

Jan. 17-18-19 Lewistown

Jan. 24-25-26 Butte (Tentative)

Feb. 1-2-3 Bozeman

Feb. 7-8-9 Billings



3 0864 1006 3217 6



REINFORCED EARTH BRIDGE ABUTMENTS on I-15 east of Basin mark the first time the Department has used this proprietary type of earth retaining structure. It uses precast concrete interlocking panels that are held in place by long straps of galvanized steel embedded in the fill behind the walls.

WINTER ROAD REPORTING

Each year, normally from November to April, the Department of Highways provides winter road reports as a service to the traveling public. During the week, reports are produced twice a day; at 7:30 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. On weekends and holidays only a morning report is prepared. Updates are recorded as needed. The reports cover only those highways maintained by the Department; the Interstates, the Primaries, and a few miles of Secondary highway.

The road report actually begins at 5:00 in the morning when 133 maintenance workers across the state check their assigned road sections; an hour's drive or more since each section averages 60 miles in length. As the trucks roll through the cold dawn hours, office personnel at base stations in eleven Highway offices begin contacting the maintenance forces by radio, gathering each section's road conditions. Radio traffic is carefully coordinated so overlapping calls don't cause interference.

The District and Area office personnel then telephone their vicinity's road conditions to answering machines in the Information Unit in Helena. Along with bulletins from the National Weather Service, these taped messages are re-written into a concise, one and one-half minute statewide report covering seven of Montana's most heavily traveled routes, plus mountain passes. The routes are: I-90; I-94, I-15; US-93; US-2; MT-200 between Missoula and Lewistown; and US-87

between Great Falls and Havre.

By 7:30 a.m. the Information Unit records the concise statewide report on a telephone answering machine that handles several toll-free lines and a local Helena number.

In the meantime the District and Area offices have typed their local road conditions into a computer terminal. The state's centralized computer in the Mitchell Building in Helena receives these messages, alphabetizes them by city, and prints them out on command at the Helena Communication Unit's terminal. This detailed statewide report, often covering several pages, is then transmitted back to the District and Area offices. The detailed report, along with the concise report from the Information Unit, is also transmitted from the Communication Unit via teletype to a number of other users. Two major wire services, Associated Press and United Press International, re-transmit the reports to most radio, TV, and newspaper outlets in Montana. In addition to the media, the report is teletyped to the Law Enforcement Network System, which covers all Highway Patrol units and most County Sheriffs' offices; the National Weather Service; and the Montana Automobile Association, which uses the information in weekly conference calls with other western states.

After the District and Area offices have transmitted their local road conditions to Helena by telephone and computer, they record their own 100-mile radius reports on telephone answering machines in their offices. This gives the public and the media 12 local

reports and a statewide report on Montana's road conditions. To produce the 3:00 p.m. report, essentially the same procedure is followed.

CLIP AND SAVE

ROAD REPORT INFORMATION

Billings	252-2806
Bozeman	586-1313
Butte	494-3666
Glendive	365-6200
Great Falls	453-2231
Havre	265-4211
Helena	444-6354
Kalispell	755-4949
Lewistown	538-9003
Miles City	232-2099
Missoula	728-8553
Wolf Point	653-1692
STATEWIDE	444-6339
TOLL-FREE	800-332-6171

MORE HIGHWAY NUMBERS

The U.S. Federal numbering system, black with a white shield, is the parent to the current Interstate system, and like it, the even numbers generally run east and west—such as US-2 on Montana's "highline"; and the odd numbers, north and south—such as US-93 from Missoula to Kalispell. Usually only roads that cross state lines are included in this numbering system.

The biggest difference between the Interstate system and the U.S. Federal system is that the *highest* numbers are in the west and south. For instance US-93 is further west than US-87 between Havre and Great Falls, and US-12 in the Helena area is south of US-2 near Havre.

RETIREMENTS

Recent retirees with over 23 years of service with the Department include: John T. Miner, 30 years, 7 months; Calvin H. Lavold, 30 years, 1 month; Robert A. Mendenhall, 28 years, 5 months; Harold J. Baker, 26 years, 11 months; Bernard L. Miller, 26 years, 11 months; Nyle V. Snell, 24 years, 4 months; and Donald J. Opitz, 23 years, 4 months.



1800 copies of this newsletter were produced at a cost of \$.08 each.
Les Benedict, Information Officer, Editor.